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Thursday, Jul 26, 2007

State & Regional - Wire

Posted on Tue, Jul. 24, 2007

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Orchards have less fruit to offer pickers after rough weather

The Associated Press

<http://www.kentucky.com>

PARIS, KY. -- Eager pickers have less fruit to forage for

in central Kentucky orchards after an April freeze and a hail storm devastated crop yields.

Growers said peaches and pears are a 100 percent loss in many orchards, though apples on many farms survived the harsh weather.

"We have no Asian or European pears," said Trudie Reed, owner of Reed Valley Orchard in Bourbon County. About 10 percent of the Reeds' peach crop survived.

Orchards normally would be gearing up for the start of the u-pick season. But freezing temperatures in April severely damaged Kentucky's fruit crop, and a hail storm a few weeks later compounded the damages at several businesses.

Reed said their remaining peaches won't be u-picked.

"There's too much waste, and we can't afford that," she said.

Haney's Appledale Farm, in Nancy in Pulaski County, isn't offering u-pick apples this year, owner Donald Haney said.

"People love u-pick, but in reduced fruit years, we simply don't have enough to do that."

Apples have proven a bit "hardier than we first thought, so it's not the total loss we feared in April," said Bill Clarey, spokesman for the Kentucky Department of Agriculture. "But there's a significant amount of crop loss."

The state's fruit crop has a retail value of \$19 million annually, according to John Strang, University of Kentucky fruit extension specialist. Cost estimates of damage for this season are between \$8 and \$10 million.

Reed said her orchard produced a "decent crop" of apples, though 60 percent of the blueberries were lost.

Kevan Evans, owner of Evans Orchard & Cider Mill in Georgetown, said apple trees there made it through the freeze, but had a hard time in the early summer drought.

"We don't have quite the size we like on our apples, but we'll start picking early-to-mid-

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August," he said. "We'll let a little u-pick go on."

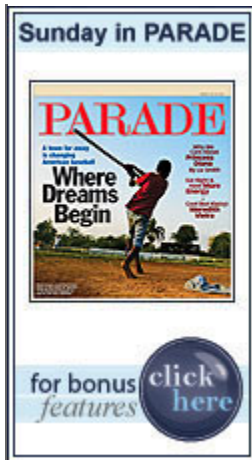
Some apple varieties fared better than others. Evans said he is "light on Fuji's, but we'll have Ginger Gold and a full crop of Gold Rush."

Boyd Orchards in Woodford County will supplement its apple crop with apples that Terry Boyd has arranged to buy from an orchard in Indiana.

"We're not picking any apples. We're going to leave those for people who want to pick their own. It's the entertainment factor," he said.

To make up for lost revenue, several orchards are adding or expanding agri-tourism features.

Information from: Lexington Herald-Leader, <http://www.kentucky.com>



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